

# JICA MAGAZINE

4

APRIL 2025  
No.016

News from the Japan International Cooperation Agency



## World Heritage Bridging Past and Future

# World Heritage Bridging Between the Past, Present, and Future

World Heritage sites reflect the trajectory of human endeavors, pinnacles of wisdom, never-to-be-forgotten tragedies, and the complexity and beauty of our planet. These treasures, carefully preserved by those before us, must be safeguarded and passed on to future generations. World Heritage sites are significant bridges between the past, present, and future. JICA works to preserve and utilize these sites, along with other cultural and natural heritage assets. By protecting these resources, nations and communities enhance their pride, amplify regional charm, and contribute to sustainable development.

Current number  
of registered sites

# 1,223

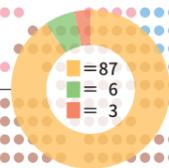
As of December 2024

## What is World Heritage?

World Heritage sites are places of Outstanding Universal Value included on the World Heritage List based on the Convention Concerning the Protection of the World Cultural and Natural Heritage (World Heritage Convention) adopted at the 1972 UNESCO General Conference. After countries that ratified the convention submit tentative lists and nomination documents to the World Heritage Committee, advisory bodies conduct on-site evaluations. The decision on whether to register the site is made annually at the World Heritage Committee meeting.

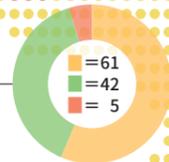
Arab States:

# 96



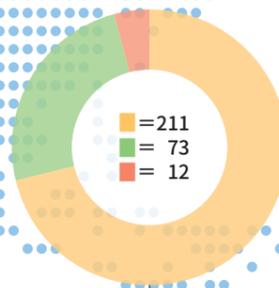
Africa:

# 108



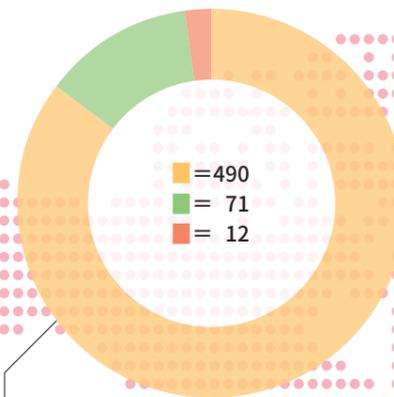
Asia and  
the Pacific:

# 296



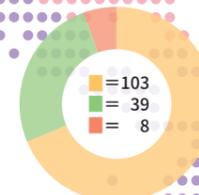
Europe and  
North America:

# 573



Latin America and  
the Caribbean:

# 150



## Number of Sites by Region

■ = Cultural Heritage ■ = Natural Heritage ■ = Mixed Heritage

Based on UNESCO's "World Heritage List Statistics" (As of the end of Dec. 2024)

The number of sites on the World Heritage List has reached 1,223 as of December 2024. Many people are familiar with their beauty and significance through the media, social media, or actually visiting them.

"World Heritage sites are shared treasures of humanity that we must protect, and that offer valuable lessons for us today," says Makino Takahiko, a UNESCO World Heritage expert from 2007 until 2014, when he became a JICA expert on sustainable tourism projects in Serbia and Mongolia. "Learning about the cultural, historical, and ecological diversity of these sites fosters mutual understanding and raises awareness about the importance of peace and our irreplaceable environment," Makino adds.

However, protecting heritage sites, many of which face existential threats from challenges such as war, climate change, and overdevelopment, is now a major issue.

The concept of World Heritage traces back to UNESCO's founding in 1945, after the devastating loss of cultural assets during World War II. UNESCO, established as an international

organization aimed at building peace through education, science, and culture, launched its early efforts to safeguard cultural properties to prevent history from repeating itself. A pivotal moment came with the 1960s International Campaign to Save the Monuments of Nubia, aimed at protecting Egypt's Abu Simbel temple complex from flooding caused by the Aswan High Dam project. UNESCO mobilized funding and expertise from around the world, successfully relocating the temples.

This led to a growing momentum to protect humanity's irreplaceable shared heritage through international collaboration, culminating in the adoption of the World Heritage Convention in 1972. Structures and sites of outstanding cultural significance, as well as landscapes and ecosystems that illustrate Earth's formation and the evolution of life, were registered as "World Heritage" for protection and preservation. Registration is conducted under three categories: Cultural Heritage; Natural Heritage; and Mixed Heritage, which embody the values of both. Systems for their protection and preservation were subsequently established.

Over time, the criteria have expanded to include themes like cultural landscapes (e.g., terraced rice fields and gardens), representing the harmonious interaction between nature and humanity; industrial heritage, showcasing the achievements of human scientific and industrial progress; and sites of memory, associated with significant and often tragic historical events. Intangible heritage—oral traditions, performing arts, and craft techniques—has also gained recognition, leading to the adoption of the 2003 Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage.

Makino emphasizes that UNESCO's approach to World Heritage has evolved with the times: "While conservation was a primary focus in the past, since the early 21st century, there has been a stronger emphasis on balancing preservation with regional development." Collaboration with the UN World Tourism Organization (UN Tourism) has enhanced tourism initiatives, leveraging the branding power of World Heritage Sites to drive sustainable development.

## Balancing heritage preservation and tourism for community-driven regional development

"World Heritage designation brings significant benefits, but it also has drawbacks. Mismanagement can turn it into a double-edged sword," says Makino. The benefits are significant—not only does the tourism industry thrive as more visitors come, but the ripple effect of the World Heritage brand also revitalizes local industries. Moreover, with proactive support from the government, public-private

# World Heritage sites close connections to the present



## Rising temperatures

One significant impact of climate change is rising temperatures. A joint 2020 study by the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) and UNESCO warns that one-third of the approximately 50 World Heritage sites with glaciers could disappear by 2050. Rising sea temperatures have also caused widespread coral bleaching, such as the mass event in Australia's **Great Barrier Reef** in 2016–2017.

## Rising sea levels

Rising sea levels are another example of climate change's impact. In Chile's Rapa Nui National Park, coastal erosion threatens the iconic moai statues and their altars. Storm surges accompanying low-pressure systems also damage many sites, such as **Venice and its Lagoon** in Italy, where a combination of rising sea levels and land subsidence has exacerbated the impact of the October to January flooding season.



## Heavy rain and drought

Extreme weather events like heavy rain and droughts have become more frequent in recent years. Pakistan's Archaeological Ruins at Moenjodaro suffered extensive damage due to flooding caused by torrential rains in 2022. Conversely, **Victoria Falls (Mosi-oa-Tunya)** in Zambia and Zimbabwe experienced a historic drought in 2019, leaving the usually roaring waterfalls nearly dry. Desertification is also impacting some heritage sites in Africa and the Middle East.

partnerships can be leveraged to promote better regional development.

However, these effects bring attendant challenges. Overtourism, where an influx of visitors negatively impacts the environment and local residents' lives, is a pressing concern. Additionally, the obligation to protect a site can impose restrictions on urban development.

"To prevent such adverse effects after designation, it is crucial to establish robust rules and regulations beforehand and manage the sites responsibly. World Heritage is undeniably an invaluable resource. While protecting and preserving these sites, we should also collaborate with local residents to use them as tools for regional revitalization in a

way that leaves a lasting legacy for future generations," Makino emphasizes.

This approach aligns closely with JICA's initiatives. Beyond safeguarding cultural and natural heritage, JICA actively supports sustainable tourism development to foster autonomous regional growth.

In terms of preservation and protection, JICA has contributed by building museum facilities, providing technical support for artifact restoration, training personnel, and assisting in the recovery of cultural assets affected by disasters. These efforts emphasize coexistence between local communities and their cultural heritage.

Regarding sustainable tourism development, JICA

The risks posed by climate change, wars, and conflicts threaten not only us but also the existence of World Heritage sites. The following are examples of globally recognized sites impacted by natural phenomena and human activities.

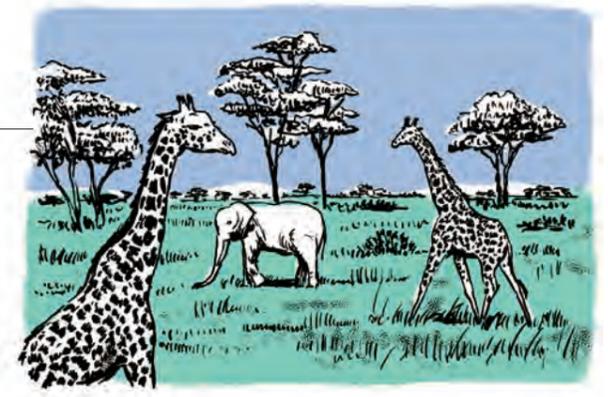


## War and conflict

As of December 2024, 56 sites are registered on the List of World Heritage in Danger, many due to wars, conflicts, or political instability. Mali's **Timbuktu**, known for its earthen mosques, and the nearby Tomb of Askia were added to the list following the 2012 conflict in northern Mali. Russia's invasion of Ukraine led to the inclusion of three sites, including the Historic Centre of Odesa, in the list.

## Poaching and deforestation

Most natural heritage sites on the List of World Heritage in Danger face threats from poaching and deforestation. Tanzania's **Selous Game Reserve**, one of the world's largest protected areas, is plagued by poaching targeting African elephants for ivory. Indonesia's Tropical Rainforest Heritage of Sumatra has seen over half of its rainforest vanish between 1985 and 2016 due to plantation development and palm oil farming.



## Overtourism

The term "overtourism" gained prominence in the mid-2010s, referring to the negative effects on residents' lives and the natural environment caused by mass tourism, such as traffic congestion, noise, and environmental degradation. Peru's Historic Sanctuary of Machu Picchu tightened entry restrictions in 2019 to prevent damage to its structures. In Japan, **Mount Fuji—part of the Fujisan site, designated a sacred place and a source of artistic inspiration**—has introduced climbing regulations and entry fees for hiking trails, starting in 2024, to curb environmental impact.

prioritizes a "regional management" approach. This concept treats the region as a single entity, aiming to operate and manage in a strategic manner while leveraging its resources—natural, cultural, industrial, and human—to enhance residents' well-being and ensure sustainable development. JICA collaborates with local governments to establish tourism infrastructure, while listening to residents to identify their challenges and working with them to find solutions through tourism.

For the past two years, Makino has been working as a JICA expert in Mongolia, focusing on sustainable tourism.

"Collaborating with local residents and travel companies, we've been developing products such as adventure tourism

and educational trips, to maximize the potential of local resources while preserving them," he explains.

Efforts also include promotion, improving visitor facilities, and partnering with Japanese travel agencies, government ministries, and local authorities to organize and market tours, leveraging JICA's strength in collaborating with specialists across various fields to advance projects.

Around the world, countless regions—whether home to designated World Heritage sites or not—are rich with untapped historical resources that can drive regional growth. Deepening understanding of and engagement with World Heritage offers opportunities to reflect on sustainable development, our cultural roots, and the future.

# Safe, people-centered streets, places, and mobility in Laos

Historic Luang Prabang, located in the mountainous region of northern Laos, is a World Heritage town. With the advent of the internet and improved transportation, the town has gained wider recognition and is now collaborating with JICA and a Japanese municipality to pursue sustainable urban development.

Luang Prabang flourished between the 14th and mid-16th centuries as the capital of the kingdom of Lan Xang (Kingdom of a Million Elephants), the precursor to modern-day Laos. Stretching approximately 2 kilometers east to west and 1 kilometer north to south along the Mekong River, it is home to more than 80 Buddhist temples, traditional houses, and structures from the French Protectorate era. The sight of the Sai Bat (morning alms) ritual performed daily by monks in orange robes is a tradition unchanged for centuries. The character of the city is reminiscent of Japan's ancient capital Kyoto for Japanese visitors.

In 1995, the city was inscribed as a World Heritage site under the name "Town of Luang Prabang." Its deep history and cultural allure, combined with the natural beauty of the surrounding area, has attracted increasing numbers of tourists over the years. Despite a population of just 100,000, the city welcomed approximately 860,000 tourists in 2019. The opening of a railway connecting the capital Vientiane to Kunming, China, in 2021 and plans for a highway are expected to further boost tourist numbers.

"The current issue is traffic," says Souphany Heuangkeo of

the Department of Transport, Ministry of Public Works and Transport of Lao PDR. "The main street, lined with temples and historic buildings, was once celebrated for its scenic beauty. Now, it's crowded with parked motorcycles and cars, ruining the landscape." Street parking also causes traffic congestion and accidents, making life more difficult for locals. Once thriving due to river transport along the Mekong, the town now faces an influx of people and goods exceeding its capacity.

In response, a project to create an Urban Transport Master Plan for Luang Prabang's sustainable development began in 2023 with JICA's support. Souphany and her team

## Speakers

Deputy Director of Road Passenger Transport Division, Department of Transport, Ministry of Public Works and Transport, Lao PDR  
**Souphany Heuangkeo**

Originally from Luang Prabang. She holds a master's degree from the University of Hyogo and a doctorate in engineering from Yokohama National University. Participated in programs at the University of Cambridge Institute. Her expertise lies in transport planning.

Director of the Takayama City Tokyo Liaison Office  
**Nagata Tomokazu**

He joined Takayama City Hall in 1996, and became a section manager of the Commerce and Industry Division in 2019. He was later appointed as the director of the Overseas Strategy Division in 2021 before assuming his current position in 2023. From 2021 to 2022, he led efforts to promote international exchange and attract overseas visitors.



1 The main streets of Sakkaline Road to Sisavangvong Road are lined with restaurants and souvenir shops. Numerous parked cars and motorcycles on the roadside disrupt both the scenery and safety.

2 A scene from the pilot project where vehicle access was prohibited, allowing people to walk freely on the streets. 3 During a visit to Takayama City, representatives from Laos observed local initiatives.



envision "a people-centered, environmentally friendly city where residents and visitors alike can get about leisurely by walking, cycling, and public transportation like buses." The project identifies transportation challenges, and in the summer of 2023, local counterparts visited places like Takayama City and Shirakawa-Go in Japan's Gifu Prefecture to observe specific transportation solutions firsthand.

Takayama City has been connected to Luang Prabang through JICA since 2016, fostering cooperative exchanges in areas such as tourism, cultural heritage preservation, agriculture, traditional crafts, and disaster prevention. With similarities to Luang Prabang in population size, geographic conditions, and historic preservation districts, Takayama welcomes over 4 million tourists annually. Nagata Tomokazu, the director of the Takayama City Tokyo Liaison Office, explains the key to handling such visitor numbers: "Regulating vehicle access to areas with historical streetscapes was initially requested by local residents. Today, many visitors enjoy strolling through these areas. Since 2020, we've also promoted park-and-ride systems, encouraging tourists to park outside the main tourist zones and explore the city on foot or by bicycle."

Drawing on Takayama's approach, the project in Luang Prabang conducted a trial to restrict car access to the main street and promote sightseeing by walking or cycling, which received positive feedback. Souphany says, "We hope to work

on implementing park-and-ride systems and enhancing public transportation in the future."

In Luang Prabang, a growing number of young people are learning English to cater to international tourists. Nagata notes, "Welcoming tourists from both Japan and abroad provides an opportunity to rediscover the value of the region." Souphany echoes this sentiment, saying, "We want to address traffic issues while also preserving our historical heritage, promoting sustainable urban development. During my time in Japan, I learned that urban planning should involve the government, local residents, and everyone in the community. I aim to prioritize local voices as we move forward with these initiatives."

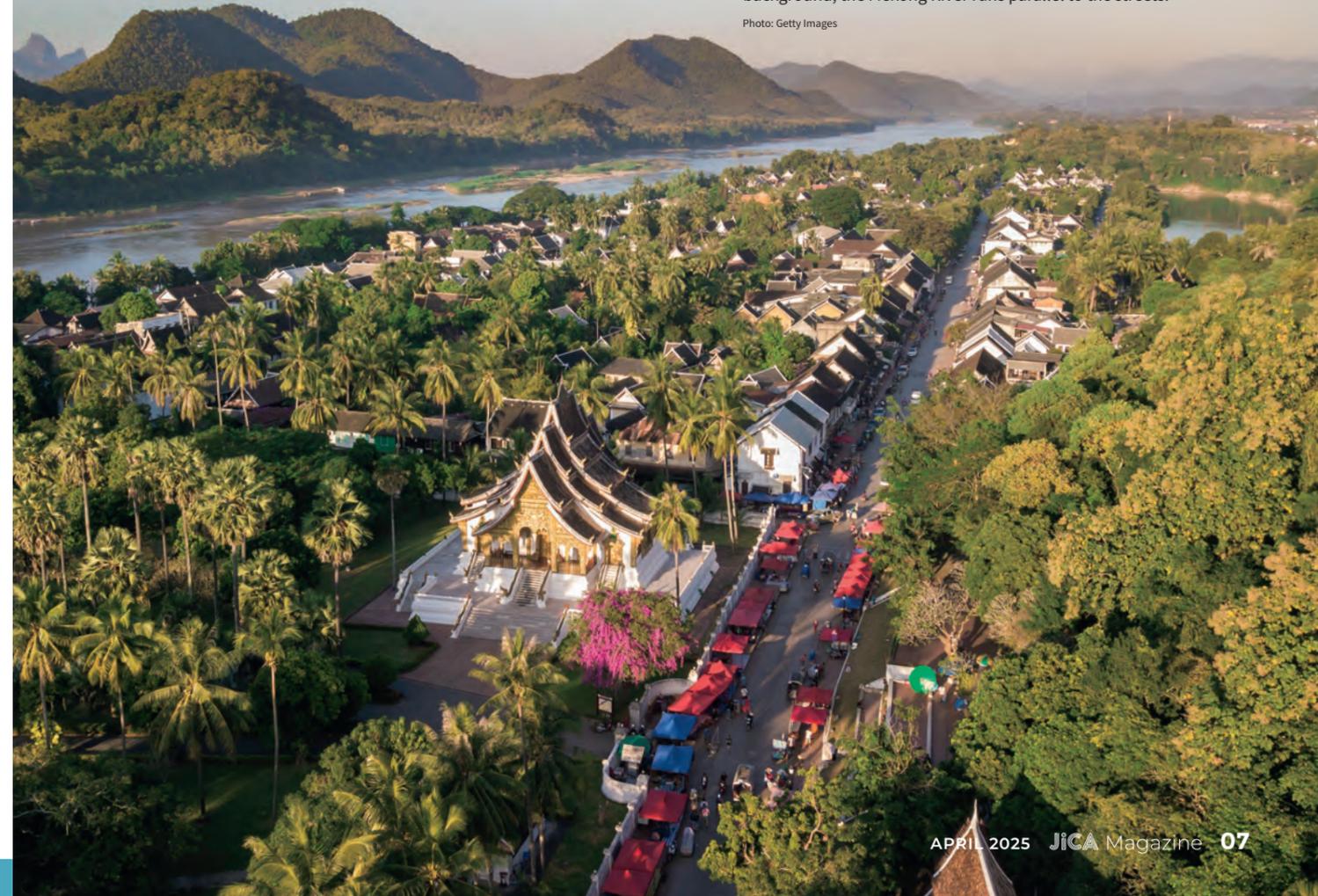
As Luang Prabang works to balance tourism's economic benefits and vitality with sustainable urban development, support from collaborators like Takayama City is invaluable. The city is forging ahead on its trial-and-error journey toward achieving this delicate equilibrium.

## World Heritage

### Town of Luang Prabang

Located in the upper reaches of the Mekong River, Luang Prabang became the capital of the kingdom of Lan Xang in 1353, until the capital was moved to Vientiane in 1560. The two streets stretching from foreground to background show Sisavangvong Road and Sakkaline Road, which transform into bustling night markets after sundown. A golden shrine (center) known as the Ho Prabang, houses the Prabang (Buddha statue), located on the grounds of the National Museum. In the background, the Mekong River runs parallel to the streets.

Photo: Getty Images



# Protecting cultural heritage and local pride to achieve peace

Palestine, a region marked by ongoing conflict, is also home to numerous invaluable cultural heritage sites. JICA works to contribute to the protection of these sites, while collaborating closely with local communities, and sharing their cultural significance with the world.

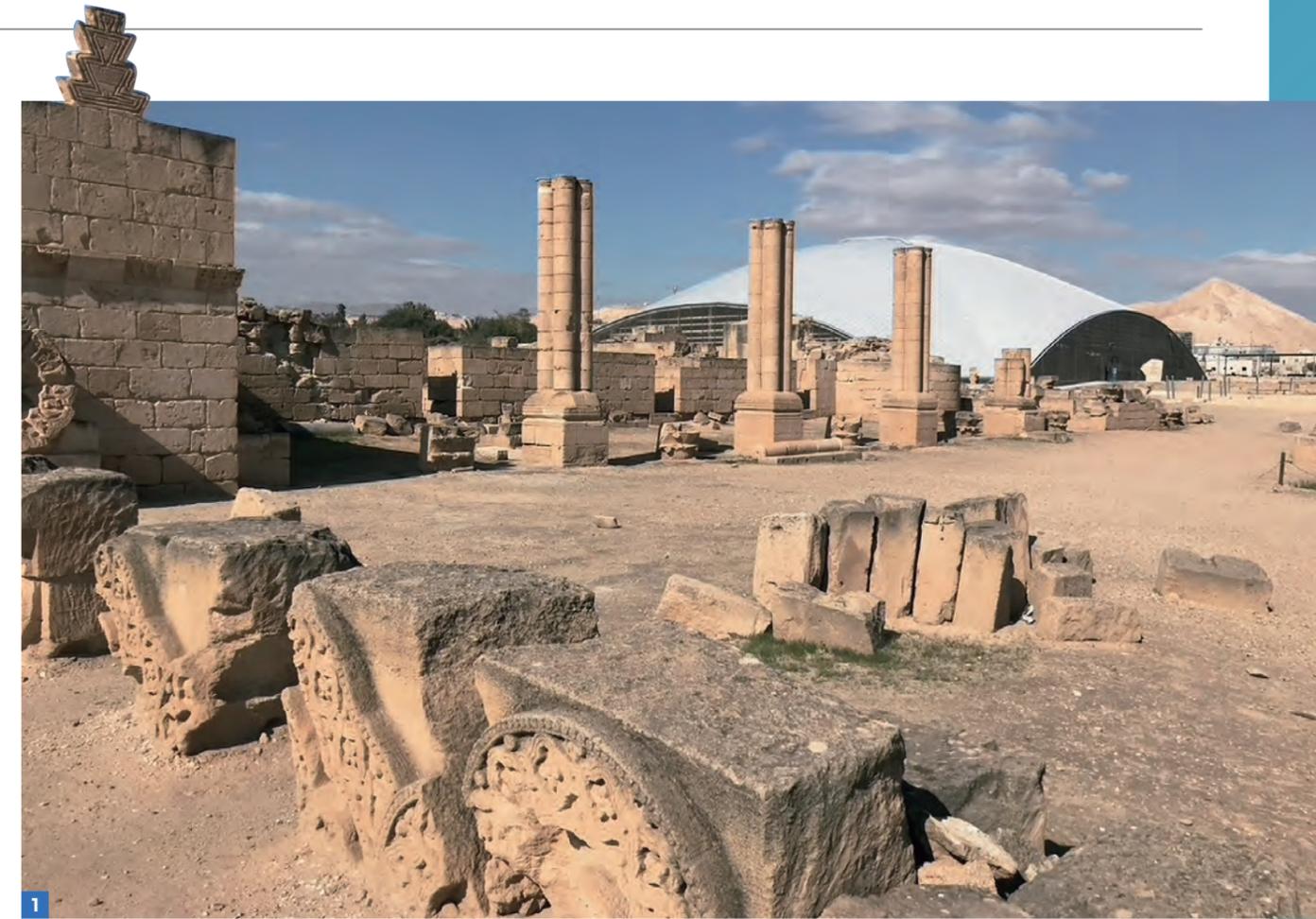
Located in the West Bank of the Palestinian Territories, the city of Jericho is referenced in the Bible and is considered one of the oldest inhabited cities in the world, with history dating back to nearly 10,000 BCE. Among its most iconic cultural landmarks is the remains of Hisham's Palace (Khirbet al- Mafjar), constructed in the early 8th century during the

Umayyad period. Its approximately 825-square-meter mosaic floor is one of the largest in the Middle East, making it a source of Palestinian pride and education for local children, who visit on school trips to learn about their heritage. Despite its high cultural value and tourism potential, the site had long been underutilized.

“The mosaic floor was covered with sand and fabric for protection, making it inaccessible. There were even reports of visitors digging into the sand without authorization,” explains Mizukami Takahiro from JICA’s Infrastructure Management Department, who has worked on urban and regional development, as well as cultural heritage preservation projects across Asia, the Middle East, and Africa. “The challenge was how to preserve the site properly while developing it for tourism.”

To address this, JICA supported the construction of a domed shelter for the mosaic floor that left it viewable by tourists. “Previous attempts by Western countries and international organizations to undertake similar projects had failed because the voices of the Palestinian people weren’t adequately considered,” Mizukami notes. “JICA engaged in extensive consultations, including expert panels with Palestinian specialists and dialogue with local residents, to build consensus every step of the way.”

After careful planning and agreement-building, construction began in 2018. Although the project faced challenges, including interruptions during the COVID-19 pandemic, the shelter was successfully completed in 2021. Still, preserving the cultural significance of the site and linking it to local development requires sustainable management. JICA dispatched a Japanese expert with UNESCO experience to help create a comprehensive management plan. This included guidance on preservation techniques, establishing rules for visitor engagement, and defining the roles of various local public institutions. “We emphasized that the key players are the Palestinian people,” Mizukami says. “We focused on



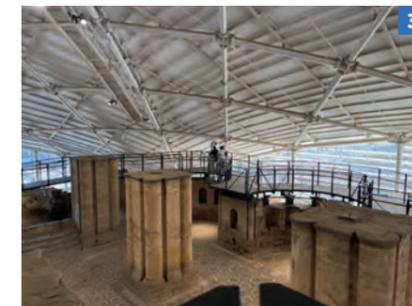
1



The mosaic floor of Hisham's Palace (Khirbet al- Mafjar) covers approximately 825 square meters and features intricate patterns crafted from countless natural stones. Years of neglect had left some sections in disrepair.



2



3

- 1 The Hisham's Palace (Khirbet al- Mafjar) archaeological site, with the protective shelter for the mosaic floor visible in the background. The shelter was designed to provide robust protection while minimizing its size to preserve the surrounding landscape.
- 2 Takimoto Megumi (right), a JICA expert who provided technical support and advice for the preservation of the site, pictured with colleagues from MoTA.
- 3 Inside the protective shelter, designed and constructed by a Japanese company.

creating a robust structure within the Palestinian Ministry of Tourism and Antiquities (MoTA), ensuring that local staff could manage the site independently after the experts left.”

In October 2023, as the management plan was nearing completion, armed conflict broke out in Gaza, forcing the suspension of operations. Despite this setback, efforts continued, and by February 2024, the Palestinian Authority successfully submitted a nomination dossier to UNESCO for World Heritage status. “This was not only about communicating the site’s value to the world but also about establishing a system to protect it for years to come,” Mizukami reflects.

When asked why cultural heritage preservation remains crucial in the humanitarian crisis-stricken region, Mizukami says, “Protecting cultural assets plays a vital role in fostering a sense of identity, showing that Palestine is a region with a rich heritage to be proud of. Moreover, preserving cultural heritage may inspire a collective desire to end conflicts and stabilize the region. It’s not just about safeguarding historical sites—it’s about protecting the people, their lives, their communities, and enabling their development.”

# Cultural heritage expertise: from Kansai to the world

To promote the preservation and sustainable use of cultural heritage through tourism development, JICA conducts training programs in Japan, particularly in the Kansai region (centered on Kyoto, Osaka, and Kobe), where extensive expertise has been cultivated. These programs provide opportunities for mutual learning between Japan and other nations.

JICA's Knowledge Co-Creation Programs (KCCPs) bring administrative officials and specialists from partner countries to Japan to learn and exchange knowledge with their Japanese counterparts. With nearly 400 courses conducted annually at JICA centers across Japan and online, the program addresses a wide range of topics, including a few highly regarded courses focused on culture. The JICA Kansai Center (JICA Kansai) runs a number of these cultural programs.

"The Kansai region, which was the nation's capital for over a thousand years, is home to invaluable cultural assets and archives, numerous universities, and research institutions," explains Ogawa Kazumasa, who oversees the planning and operation of training programs at JICA Kansai. "This has led to an accumulation of knowledge and networks related to cultural heritage, which we leverage to design these training programs."

One standout course, Museums and Community Development, has been running since 1994. Held in cooperation with the National Museum of Ethnology in Osaka, as well as other museums and research institutions,

the program has hosted 305 participants from 66 countries since its inception. The course has two main components: effective museum management and community engagement.

In the effective museum management segment, participants learn about a wide array of topics under the guidance of experts, including collection preservation, exhibit design, artifact photography, and museum shop operations. "We continually update the curriculum to reflect the times, such as incorporating training on social media outreach," says Ogawa.

The community engagement segment involves visits to museums that collaborate with local communities and festivals, offering insights into partnership methods.

In many developing countries, museums face challenges such as limited budgets and a shortage of personnel with expertise in preservation, exhibition, and community outreach. "This program, spanning two and a half months, provides comprehensive learning on every aspect of museum operations. Participants take their roles seriously, representing their countries with great enthusiasm. Many

use what they've learned in Japan to implement their own training programs back home or advance to leadership roles as museum directors, nurturing the next generation," Ogawa explains.

Another long-running course, Sustainable Tourism Development with Cultural Heritage and Local Community, focuses on conserving cultural heritage while fostering tourism. This month-long program helps participants develop action plans for preservation and tourism promotion based on their own cultural heritage sites.

Featuring various expert lecturers, the program covers a broad range of topics, from architecture and legal frameworks to disaster prevention and intangible cultural heritage, according to Ueno Misaki, who is in charge of economic development programs at JICA Kansai. "Fieldwork is also a key component. Participants often express how they've gained a deeper understanding of cultural heritage as not just tourism resources but as vital parts of the identity of local communities. They also learn the importance of balancing preservation with regional development," says Ueno. "We aim

to create programs where Japanese lecturers and students can also gain new insights and inspiration from the participants."

One of the key strengths of JICA's Knowledge Co-Creation Programs is the opportunity for participants from diverse cultures and backgrounds to interact, often leading them to rediscover the value of their own country's natural and cultural heritage. These interactions also foster lasting global networks.

"In 2024, a participant from Palestine shared the challenges faced in protecting cultural heritage during times of conflict. Everyone was deeply moved by the gravity of the situation," recalls Ueno. "After the lecture, many participants reflected on how preserving cultural heritage requires global cooperation, a sentiment that left a strong impression."

Preserving the shared human treasure of cultural heritage, and using it to drive regional development, requires understanding its significance, skill acquisition, and dissemination of this knowledge. These two long-running JICA KCCPs have made substantial contributions toward these goals.

## Sustainable tourism development with cultural heritage and local community

A course designed for government officials responsible for tourism development based on the preservation of cultural resources. Launched in 2003, its goal is to equip participants with the knowledge needed to promote sustainable tourism development by preserving and utilizing cultural heritage. Leveraging the unique features and expertise of the Kansai region, the course includes lectures and fieldwork conducted with the support of organizations such as the Ritsumeikan Trust, government agencies, and research institutions.



1 Participants enjoy a walking tour in Nara guided by student volunteers, with several expressing interest in creating similar volunteer programs in their home countries. 2 Participants visit Nara Prefectural Kashihara High School, where they exchange cultural presentations with local students. 3 At the Nagahama Hikiyama Museum in Shiga Prefecture, participants are intrigued to learn about the intricate system behind children's kabuki performances held on festival floats during the Nagahama Hikiyama Festival.



## Museums and community development

A comprehensive training program for museum curators in partner countries, equipping them with essential methods for museum operations. This program aims to nurture professionals who can contribute to the economic and cultural development of their countries and support community tourism initiatives. This is one of JICA's longest-standing programs. Building a global network of museums is also a core objective.

Participants receive a lecture on preventive preservation of cultural artifacts at the National Museum of Ethnology in Osaka, learning about temperature and humidity control using data loggers.



# Japanese experts collaborate to conserve Egypt's treasures

The preservation of cultural properties, including World Heritage sites, involves a wide range of specialists. Through a long-standing partnership, three Japanese experts were dispatched as part of a JICA technical cooperation project with the Grand Egyptian Museum (GEM). The museum has offered limited access to its galleries since October 2024, ahead of the official opening.



Photo: Grand Egyptian Museum

## JICA's support for the Grand Egyptian Museum

Constructed with support from Japanese ODA Loans, the GEM is the largest museum in the world dedicated to a single civilization. JICA has been instrumental in both the museum's construction and the capacity development of experts working at the Grand Egyptian Museum Conservation Center (GEM-CC), an adjacent facility established by the Egyptian government. Between 2008 and 2016, JICA implemented the Grand Egyptian Museum Conservation Center Project to develop human resources in conservation. Since 2016, it has also carried out the Grand Egyptian Museum Joint Conservation Project (GEM-JC), collaborating on the conservation of actual artifacts.

## Cultural Property Conservation Specialist

Associate Professor at Tokyo University of the Arts **Okada Yasushi**

# Preserving Egypt's treasures through scientific analysis

My expertise lies in the conservation and restoration of wooden artifacts, including Buddhist statues. In the GEM-JC project, conducted jointly with Egypt, I worked on nine artifacts discovered in King Tutankhamun's tomb, including chariots and ceremonial beds.

Successfully completing these tasks would not have been possible without advance efforts in human resource development. At the time, Egypt's team primarily consisted of young staff. During the GEM-CC project, we not only provided technical guidance but also aimed to unify awareness around the principles of conservation and restoration.

Artifact conservation and restoration isn't something done purely through experience. Using tools such as digital microscopes, we conducted thorough scientific investigations into the condition of each artifact, much like diagnosing a human illness. Is it a mild issue, or does it require surgical intervention? Could it potentially worsen, like a cancerous disease? Conservation is a process of logically examining an artifact's damage, including the reasons for its deterioration, followed by scientifically considering the best treatment. "The trust and shared understanding that Japan fostered with the Egyptian staff through the process of the GEM-CC project led to the joint conservation of the actual artifacts at the GEM-JC."

For the actual conservation work, we used equipment provided by JICA, including digital microscopes and portable X-ray devices.

Despite their historical and cultural significance, the nine artifacts had never undergone scientific analysis before. Through these investigations, we made globally significant discoveries. Artifact conservation is a high-stakes endeavor, always carrying the risk of irreversible damage. There's always the fear of losing a 3,350-year-old treasure in an instant. Sharing this intense pressure and overcoming it together across national borders was the most rewarding aspect of the project.



First aid to secure the canopy of a chariot for transport (left: Okada). The treatment was adapted to the condition of the artifact.

## Archaeology Specialist

JICA Expert and Visiting Professor at Higashi Nippon International University **Nishisaka Akiko**

# Vital archaeological insights into conservation

I have been involved in excavation projects in Egypt since my student days. Archaeology primarily revolves around fieldwork, uncovering artifacts and sites. However, it also includes analyzing previously excavated artifacts and museum collections to establish essential information—when, where, and how they were created and unearthed—by tracing documents and historical records.

During the implementation of this technical cooperation project in Egypt, I reflected on how Japan's strengths could contribute. For example, in archaeology, documentation is critically important. Although basic practices such as photographing and recording may seem straightforward, the meticulousness of Japanese methods impressed our Egyptian counterparts. Consequently, we emphasized adopting a rigorous approach to documentation throughout the project. The artifacts we worked on, including 4,300-year-old wall paintings, were truly remarkable. There were moments when I felt awe at the wisdom of ancient Egyptians.

When one of the chariots was being analyzed by our Egyptian counterparts, they discovered errors in its previous restoration.

Nishisaka (front row, far left), deputy project manager of the GEM-JC, utilized her archaeological expertise to connect specialists from diverse fields.



Using old photographs as a reference, they reassembled it correctly—a process filled with continuous discoveries. Dealing with such artifacts, every day brought a sense of excitement as I headed to the worksite.

Following the Arab Spring in 2011, cultural heritage in Egypt faced temporary crises, including looting and destruction. However, this also sparked a renewed interest in their cultural heritage, with more Egyptians viewing these treasures as a source of national pride, deeply tied to their identity. The GEM's opening is a beacon of hope, highlighting the importance of fostering skilled professionals to protect Egypt's heritage. It was incredibly rewarding to contribute at such a pivotal time.

## Packing & Transportation Specialist

Nippon Express Co., Ltd., Kansai Fine Arts Branch **Tokuda Hidemasa**

# Ensuring safe transport of priceless artifacts

Since joining Nippon Express, a global logistics services company, I have worked in the department specializing in the transport of fine art. The most challenging items to handle are undoubtedly three-dimensional objects. For instance, we've transported national treasures such as Senju Kannon statues for exhibitions in Japan. These Buddha statues were never designed to be moved. Transporting something created during the Heian period (794–1192) poses a significant risk of damage, but it is our mission to ensure their relocation without even the slightest scratch.

In Egypt, I joined the GEM-CC project, and the first thing I noticed was the differing attitudes toward transportation. In Japan, the added value of careful handling is well recognized, but in Egypt, the mindset often seemed to prioritize simply moving items from point A to point B. Since we were dealing with cultural artifacts, our training began with the basics. Our first transport involved moving a 3,350-year-old chariot and a ceremonial bed from the Egyptian Museum in Cairo to the GEM-CC, a journey of about 20 km. In Japan, such items would be transported in climate-controlled vehicles designed for

Preparing to transport artifacts from the Egyptian Museum to the GEM-CC. Tokuda (far left) packs the chariot inside its showcase to protect it from sudden changes in humidity.



fine art, with measures to minimize vibrations. But these resources weren't available in Egypt, and the roads were uneven and poorly maintained. To protect the artifacts from environmental factors, we used specialized packing materials and placed anti-vibration pallets on the truck, driving at a very slow pace.

The transport of these artifacts gained worldwide media attention and was a complete success. The truth is, achieving the mission of not causing even a millimeter of damage depends on removing all uncertainty during the unpacking process. Achieving a level of preparation that instills absolute confidence, no matter who observes, is crucial. I believe we successfully conveyed the importance of this thoroughness in Egypt.



1 Teaching automobile maintenance skills to former combatants with disabilities in Rwanda.  
 2 Support for elementary school education in Uganda.  
 3 Support for elementary school education in Fiji.

## Celebrating the 60th Anniversary of JICA's Volunteer Program



2025 marks the 60th anniversary of JICA's Volunteer Program, which began with the dispatch of 29 Japan Overseas Cooperation Volunteers (JOCVs) to five countries: Laos, Cambodia, Malaysia, the Philippines, and Kenya.

Since 1965, a total of 57,000 JICA volunteers have contributed their expertise and experiences toward supporting people in 99 countries across more than 190 professions, and fields including agriculture, forestry and fisheries, healthcare, social welfare, commerce, and tourism.

Many returning JOCVs continue to leverage their experiences from the program, contributing to addressing social challenges in Japan, while some also return to work overseas.

To commemorate this milestone, JICA has launched a yearlong anniversary project under the theme "The Power of JICA Volunteers—Change the World, Change Japan—," featuring a 60th-anniversary logo and a dedicated website.

Through a variety of 60th-anniversary initiatives, JICA will share the stories of its volunteers and their contributions to bringing about change in Japan and the world.



Rice planting in Bangladesh.



Support of fisheries in Kenya.



Support for machinery repair in Tonga.



▲▲▲  
 For more information,  
 Visit our **website**.

## Leading sustainable tourism development in Peru

Peru boasts a rich cultural heritage and is home to 13 UNESCO World Heritage sites, including Machu Picchu. There are more than 22,000 other registered significant historical sites, underpinning a tourism industry that contributes nearly 7% to GDP and sustains 1.3 million jobs.

Helping to build a sustainable industry in the face of challenges from natural disasters, overtourism and underdeveloped legal protection is Liz Chirinos. Formerly a Tourism Vice-minister, she leverages her extensive experience to bridge the gap between international cooperation and national regulations to implement transformative projects in rural Peru.

"In 2008, JICA and the National Tourism Authority of Peru collaborated on a loan project to improve tourism facilities in the northern part of the country," recalls Chirinos.

The project was still in development when she left the tourist ministry but JICA expressed an interest in continued collaboration. "That's how my journey with JICA started—I needed to see my 'baby' born."

Most of Peru's globally renowned sites are in the country's south, attracting the majority of foreign tourists, although the north is also home to numerous impressive attractions, including ruins of pre-Inca settlements.

To help address this imbalance, JICA has implemented two projects in Peru's Amazonas region inspired by the eco-museum concept used so successfully in Jordan's As-Salt City. Eco-museums are open-air sites where heritage is preserved as it is by the community.

The Project for Sustainable Development of the

Cultural Landscape of the Upper Utcubamba Valley created six new discovery trails, integrating archaeological sites and local traditions. Meanwhile, the USD 91 million (including a USD 35 million Japanese ODA loan) Amazonas Rural Development Project developed infrastructure, transportation, and waste management initiatives that have seen the region internationally recognized as a Green Destination.

"JICA's work over the past 11 years in Amazonas has given people a sense of pride. They now see their landscape and traditions as treasures to protect and share with responsible visitors, ensuring tourism benefits their communities."

Women in the region, once hesitant to open their towns to visitors as part of an eco-museum, have embraced tourism after an internship program in Colombia. "Seeing people in similar rural conditions successfully selling handicrafts and local products inspired them to do the same."

Chirinos emphasizes that even wider participation of local people is crucial to maximizing the benefits of infrastructure projects and achieving sustainable development.

Over 13 years at JICA Peru, Chirinos has learned the value of solidarity and trust—principles shaping her approach to sustainable tourism. Her next challenge is developing Utcubamba Valley as a must-visit destination. "Tourism is about experiences—learning from locals, understanding the environment, and immersion in heritage."



Left: Local women in Lima participating in one of the six discovery trails proudly display their traditional fabrics. Right: Quiocta Cavern, Peru's first illuminated caves with JICA support.



Senior Project Manager  
 JICA Peru

**Liz Chirinos**

# Collaboration with JICA in archaeological and conservation fields

**Dr. Eissa Zidan Abd el-Badie**

General Director of Executive Affairs of Conservation and Transportation of Artifacts for the Grand Egyptian Museum/ Supervisor of Conservation of Khufu Second Boat Project



It is a great honor to write about the cooperation I have enjoyed with JICA over the years. I have had the privilege of working closely with experts and officials from Japan since 2009, allowing me to gain profound insights into the Japanese people's remarkable culture. Known for their precision, skill, and dedication, the Japanese have been invaluable partners in numerous collaborative projects, particularly at the Grand Egyptian Museum (GEM).

One of the most significant areas of cooperation has been in the field of artifact preservation, maintenance, and conservation. The Japanese side provided extensive support to the staff at the Grand Egyptian Museum Conservation Center (GEM-CC), offering specialized training programs in a broad range of areas, including packing, transportation, analysis, diagnosis, and conservation of artifacts made from various materials. These training programs have greatly enhanced the capacity of GEM staff and ensured the successful completion of many critical tasks.

Among the highlights of our collaboration was the documentation, packing, and transportation, conservation, and exhibition of 72 invaluable artifacts including those from the tomb of King Tutankhamun. These items, such as chariots and ritual beds, hold great significance for Egypt's ancient civilization. Despite the challenges, the strong cooperation between the Egyptian and Japanese teams allowed us to complete the project successfully, with the artifacts now displayed in stable condition at the GEM.

Another monumental project that showcased the strength of our partnership was the conservation and display

of the Second Boat of King Khufu. This project, one of the largest conservation efforts of its kind worldwide, was initially deemed impossible by many scientific institutions due to the severe deterioration of the boat's wooden components. However, JICA was the only organization to accept this challenge and work alongside the Egyptian team.

Led by Professor Yoshimura Sakuji, the Japanese side brought their advanced technologies, expert knowledge, and dedicated resources to this monumental task. To date, over 1,700 wooden pieces of the Second Khufu Boat have been documented, lifted, and conserved, setting the stage for the assembly of the boat at the "Khufu Boat Museum" at the GEM. This will be the first time that both the First and Second Khufu Boats are displayed together, offering a unique glimpse into ancient Egyptian history.

Japan's ongoing support for the GEM project has been essential from its inception to its realization. The GEM now stands as one of Egypt's most significant cultural, historical, and archaeological offerings to the world in the 21st century. We are deeply grateful to the Japan International Cooperation Agency for its enduring support of cultural and heritage preservation. My sincere thanks and appreciation go to the people and government of Japan for their invaluable contributions to cultural exchange and humanity's shared heritage.

#### PROFILE

Involved since 2007 in the establishment of the GEM-CC, where he has been General Director of Executive Affairs of Conservation and Transportation of Artifacts for the GEM. Achievements include the challenging transportation of artifacts including King Tutankhamun's collection and the First Boat of King Khufu. Also served as the Conservation Supervisor for the Second Boat of King Khufu.



The Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA) is one of the world's largest bilateral aid agencies, supporting socioeconomic development in developing countries in different regions of the world.

**JICA**  
MAGAZINE

**Publisher:** Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA)  
Nibancho Center Bldg. 5-25 Niban-cho, Chiyoda-ku, Tokyo 102-8012, Japan  
<https://jicamagazine.jica.go.jp/en/>  
Edited in cooperation with CCC Media House



Disclaimer: Any maps used in this publication are only for illustrative purposes and do not imply any opinion of JICA on the legal status of any country or territory, the borderline of any country or territory or its demarcation, or the geographic names.